

Subject: *Wrong Ideas about God*

Scripture: *Psalms 50:14-23*

A. W. Tozer said, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” He is absolutely right, and that is the reason we need to know and believe what the Bible says because the Bible is the self-revelation of God. In its pages He reveals who He is and what He does. He also reveals some wrong ideas about Himself.

Charles Spurgeon preached a sermon titled, “Mistakes about God” on November 26, 1874 (about 140 years ago to the day). Some of those mistakes have been around a long time and they are still with us today. People are still trying to re-invent God and replace God with their own ideas of what He is like. It has been said that in the beginning man was created in the image of God and ever since then man has tried to return the favor by creating God in the image of man. What are some wrong ideas of God?

Wrong idea #1 – God is one of many gods

As we saw in last week’s message, God reveals Himself as the one true God over and over again in Scripture. People in the ancient world soon filled the world with idols and the worship of these false gods. They based their lives on what they believed about these gods. We call it mythology. They made room for many gods and goddesses. On one of his missionary journeys Paul came into Athens (Acts 17) and noticed the people had made an image with the words inscribed, “To the unknown god.” They were concerned they might have overlooked one of the gods and didn’t want to offend him or her. Paul boldly preached and said, “I am here to tell you who that unknown God is,” and he told them about the true God and His Son Jesus.

Now we may read that story and think we are not dumb. We know that statues and idols are foolish. We may not have idols made by hands, but we can have idols made in our minds and imagination. We can have idols in our hearts. These are the things we put trust in and things we live for: money, achievement, sports and recreation, career, or family.

Wrong idea #2 – God is different now than He used to be

This wrong idea takes many subtle forms. Some believe the God of the Old Testament is different from the God of the New Testament, or that people understood God one way until Jesus came and now we know He is kinder and gentler. At least He is not involved in this world like He used to be. That’s probably what people thought in the days of Noah before the flood. Some believe that God is changing with the times. We want a god who is more tolerant and accepting. The great concern in the church today is to be relevant and so we avoid things like God’s wrath, judgment, righteousness, and holiness. We avoid heavy doctrine and major on the practical aspects of life (how to have a better home, a better self-image, etc.). And it shows in our worship. We are more concerned about being relevant than being reverent.

Wrong idea #3 – God is limited in some ways

Some believe that God is not as powerful as He used to be. He is weak and tired or sick, or maybe He is semi-retired and just working part-time now. After all, they say, the world is in such a bad shape and so many bad things happen to many good people. The only way to explain this is to believe that God is not all-powerful, but He is doing the best He can. This is the view of process theology. The Bible says in fact that God is not limited in any way. He is not limited by time, but He is eternal. He is not limited in space; He is omnipresent. He is not limited in knowledge; He is omniscient. He is not limited in power; He is omnipotent. And He is not limited in authority; He is sovereign. That is our God.

Wrong idea # 4 – God needs something from us

This wrong idea is addressed in Psalm 50:7-13. God is self-existent. He is “I AM,” the God who depends on no one or nothing else. He is self-sufficient. God doesn’t need any helpers or supporters or defenders or advisers. A. W. Tozer writes this: “Were all human beings suddenly to become blind, still the sun would shine by day and the stars by night, for these owe nothing to the millions who benefit from their light. (In the same way) if every man on earth were to become atheist, it could not affect God in any way. He is what He is in Himself without regard to any other. To believe in Him adds nothing to His perfections; to doubt Him takes nothing away” (*The Knowledge of the Holy*, 40).

Wrong idea #5 – God is like us

This wrong idea is described in Psalm 50:21. The writer says, “You thought I was like yourself.” What are some of the ways you may think God is like you?

- God is hard to please – He is demanding, harsh, or unreasonable. The fact is that it is impossible to please God on our own. **Hebrews 11:6** *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*
- God can be fooled – Some people try to play games with God. God does business with people who mean business.
- God is frustrated – Some people act like God fears the worst but hopes for the best. They think that God is not sure how everything will turn out. Things are so out of control and He is frustrated by what He sees.
- God can be bribed – Some people think God will accept our good deeds, our giving, our church attendance, even our promises and good intentions.
- God can be used – He can be manipulated and controlled. For some people their religion is a good luck charm. They want things to go well, so they stay on God’s good side. Surely He will feel obligated to help them and life will go better.
- God can be ignored and avoided – That may be true for now, but not forever.

Who is to blame for these wrong ideas about God? To some degree the church is guilty of not preaching and teaching the truth. Some of the blame falls on Christians who reflect a wrong image of God to the people they know. Our greatest privilege and highest responsibility is to know God as He really is and to live in such a way that others will come to know Him. In other words, we must know Him and make Him known.

This is no time for silence. A. W. Tozer wrote: “Always the most revealing thing about the Church is her idea of God, just as her most significant message is what she says about Him or leaves unsaid, for her silence is often more eloquent than her speech” (*Knowledge of the Holy*, 9).

This is no time for ignorance. When Paul told the people of Athens about the unknown God, he also told them what they needed to do:

- **Acts 17:30-31** ³⁰ *And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:* ³¹ *Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*